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AN ADDRESS

Commemorative of the part taken by the Inhabitants

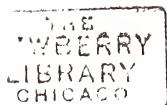
OF THE

ORIGINAL TOWN OF LEICESTER,

IN THE

EVENTS OF THE REVOLUTION:

DELIVERED AT LEICESTER, JULY 4, 1849.



BY EMORY WASHBURN.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY C. C. P. MOODY,

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2349

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In suffering the following Address to be published, the reader is assured, that the only motive of the writer is, to furnish to many who desired it, the brief historical sketch which it contains of some of the events of the revolution in which the inhabitants of the original town of Leicester took part. Their posterity, which has become numerous and greatly scattered, it was thought, would naturally take an interest in a recital of these, and it was believed that by presenting them in an authentic form, many might be gratified by an opportunity thereby to refer to them, who were not present on the occasion when the Address was delivered. This explanation, it is hoped, will relieve the writer from remark, for having so far departed from the line of prudence as to suffer an address to be published, which had been prepared upon so hackneyed a topic as the commemoration of American Independence.

NOTE.—The Address was delivered in a grove, a little distance west of the meeting-house, where a part of Gen. Burgoyne's army encamped on their march through Massachusetts, as prisoners of war, in 1777.

2349



A D D R E S S.

EVERY year serves to develope the importance of that event which we are met to celebrate. Its history has too often been recited to need its being repeated here. Looking back upon it from the point at which we now view it, the Declaration of American Independence stands out as the great political event of modern times. It forms the commencement of a new era. In its consummation, the charm of antiquated systems was broken. The mere force of brute power lost its terrors, and man, at last, stood forth the equal of his fellow man in the conscious dignity of a common nature.

Standing as we do at the distance of seventy-three years from that event, our curiosity is naturally awakened to trace the causes which led to such a declaration. And as we glance along the history of that period, and mark the prominent incidents as they rise before the mind, we must still be conscious that there is something to be sought for, deeper down among the elements, of which the state is composed, which gave the first impulse to the American Revolution. We may read of the "Stamp Act," and the "Tea Tax," and the "Boston Port Bill," and how our fathers rose, as one man, to resist those acts of oppressive legislation. But the reason why our fathers thus rose — why, when

almost all Europe were content to be taxed to the utmost, the few and feeble and scattered colonies of America stood ready to repel the first attempt to levy duties upon them, against their consent — must be sought for at an earlier period of our history than that chapter which is recited in the Declaration of our Independence. We must go back to the character and opinions of the men who planted Plymouth, and Salem, and Boston, if we would find the germ of that revolution. They were the men and the companions of the men who, in their zeal as republicans, bearded royalty in its own palace halls, and in their devotion as Christians, had rather worship God in the wilderness, than mingle in what they regarded as the mummeries of human ordinance, though played off in the most gorgeous cathedral, by the proudest prelate whom church and state ever bedizened with the robes of power. They came here with the rights of Englishmen, and there never was an hour, from the time the Pilgrims landed till the Treaty of Peace in '83, when these men or their descendants were willing to compromit or yield their birthright as Englishmen. When the struggle, therefore, came, when in an evil hour for the mother country, she undertook to levy moneys of the colonists which they had never granted, it found the country alive to the indignity. The spirit of Hampden was roused in every village in the land to resist at the threshold, the encroachment of royal prerogative.

If we undertake to ascertain how it was that this spirit was thus kept alive in these remote colonies, while it had, at times, been so nearly extinct in England, I greatly mistake, or it will be found that few causes exerted a more direct influence than the institution and maintenances of town organizations. It should be re-

membered that these municipal corporations, blending as they do the management of social, religious, and educational interests, are, principally, of a New England origin. They were, at first, identified with the maintenance of churches and religious worship. And when, as was soon the case, that other glory of New England—the common-school system—was established, it was through the agency of towns that it grew up to its present beauty and strength.

By this division of the territory, each municipality became a little independent democracy, in which its several members, while taking care of its local interests, were acting a part in the affairs of the whole Commonwealth. In this way, a healthy circulation was kept up through every part of the body politic, and, as their government was representative in spirit as well as in form, the feelings and opinions which prevailed in one quarter, found a ready response throughout the colony.

In the history, therefore, of almost any of the early towns in this ancient Commonwealth, we should be able to trace in no small degree, the progress of the struggle between the English government and the Colonies, and therein to read of the motives which impelled them to resist, together with the sacrifices to which they submitted, to sustain that struggle. It would be found, that it was by means of these town organizations, that the leading spirits in one section held intercourse with those in another, and, through them, reached the masses who were to be moved. Newspapers were comparatively rare, and intercourse through the post-offices and mails was slow, expensive, and, by no means, in general use. When, therefore, that noble band of patriots who had their home in Boston and its vicinity, were desirous

of moving the remote parts of the Province, they transmitted their letters or their pamphlets to leading individuals in the several towns, where they were read and discussed in open town meetings before all the inhabitants. And in this way, much of that harmony of action, that generous self-devotion was awakened which burst forth, as if spontaneously, in every part of New England.

I have thought these remarks were due to the occasion when assembled, as we are, to commemorate the part which one of these towns took in the struggle for our independence. Humble as this part may have been, and limited as were her means to urge forward the great enterprize of the nation, we shall, if I do not greatly mistake, discover in her unpretending history, the same springs of action, the same sacrifices, the same hopes and the same causes of discouragement which give to our national annals, of that period, so much of their exciting interest.

It is well therefore that we have come up hither, to renew the associations which this spot is calculated to awaken. It is well, while a few yet remain to form a link, as it were, with revolutionary times, to come together and recall the simple story of what our fathers and mothers did and suffered that we, their children, might be free. It binds us still stronger to the spot that gave us birth, to know that its history is not unworthy of awakening a feeling of something like a generous pride. If there be those who, without the sympathy of birth or parentage with these scenes, have honored us with their presence, they will hardly expect an apology, under the call by which we have been convened, though, upon a national holiday, we may indulge in a detail of local incidents or personal anecdote.

Before entering into those details, a word of explanation may be proper, why, in a celebration intended to be local, a portion of four several and independent towns were expected to unite. The original town of Leicester was incorporated in 1714, and embraced Spence, Leicester, a part of Paxton, and a part of what is now Auburn. In 1753, Spencer was incorporated, and in 1765, Paxton became a town. But such was the jealousy of the royal governor, of a popular representation, that, instead of clothing these corporations with the usual powers conferred upon towns, they were still united with the original territory so far as the election of representatives was concerned, under the name of "Districts."

This continued until the 19th July, 1775, and we consequently find, that in all their measures preliminary to the revolution, as well as in all the early movements after the revolution had begun, these towns co-operated with each other as one body politic. Their representative in the General Court, or Provincial Congress, was sometimes taken from one and sometimes from another, indiscriminately. They came together in town meetings. Committees, selected from them all, prepared the resolutions and instructions which embodied the opinions, and guided the representatives of the entire district. One spirit animated them alike, and it is difficult at this day, to distinguish the part which either took in the early movements which prepared the people to declare and, subsequently, to maintain their independence. And these remarks it will be remembered, apply equally to the part of Auburn which remained united with Leicester till 1778.

If, then, in what I may offer, I shall, for brevity's sake, allude to what was done by all these towns, as having been the action of Leicester, I trust I shall not

be misunderstood as indulging in an invidious eulogy of a part where all deserve commendation alike.

The training and habits of the people of this town had prepared them to enter with intelligence and spirit into the discussions which preceded the revolution. Several of the leading families had removed here directly from England, and brought with them a knowledge and a love of their rights as Englishmen.* They early established schools, and had uniformly maintained religious worship under a succession of educated clergymen. They had cherished moreover, all the feelings of English loyalty, and had shown themselves ready to fight the battles of England, whenever and wherever an enemy was to be encountered. Louisburg, and Quebec, and Crown Point, and "Old Ti," were as familiar to them as household words, and I could point out to you, on the muster rolls of the Indian and French wars, the name of many a citizen of Spencer and Leicester, who shared in their perils and rejoiced in the triumph of the British arms. But with all their loyalty, they were always jealous of prerogative, and were ready to detect every encroachment of the crown upon the liberties which they knew the people of England had secured to themselves by their great revolution of 1688.

When, therefore, the proposition for taxing these colonies was brought forward by Mr. Grenville in the British parliament in 1764, it found the people of these towns ready to meet the question, in whatever form it should be presented.

It will be recollectcd that the proposition for the Stamp Act was made in March, 1764, but the bill did not pass till March 1765; nor was it to take effect till the 1st of November following.

* Among these were the families of Stebbings', in Spencey, and of Denny's and Southgate's, in Leicester.

In October, and before the act had taken effect, a meeting of the inhabitants of the town was called, to see, among other things, "if the town will give instructions to their representative *in this critical conjuncture.*" The instructions which were adopted on that occasion, breathe a spirit of devoted loyalty, but, at the same time, a stern determination to stand by their rights under the English constitution and their own charter. They charge their representative "by no means to give his assent to any measures whatever, that might imply their willingness to submit to (that act) or be anywise aiding or assisting in putting the same in execution, but in every proper manner, they expect he would appear against it."

In June 1768, Gov. Bernard finding the legislature unwilling to rescind the appeal which they had made to the other colonies on the subject of the encroachments of the crown, dissolved that body. In September following, it was ascertained that troops had been ordered from Halifax to Boston, for the purpose of overawing the growing spirit of insubordination in the Province. The people of Boston, thereupon issued a circular call for a convention of the various towns to be holden on the 22d of that month, to take these measures into consideration. The circular bore date the 14th, and Leicester, ever ready at a moment's call, assembled in town meeting on the 19th. A delegate was chosen and charged, in a series of able and spirited resolutions. But so cautious, withal, were they, that, while they recite the grievances which they desire to have removed, they limit his authority to the *consulting* upon such measures as might come before that body, not being willing to yield their own judgment, in the last resort, as to the policy which ought to be adopted.

In 1768, the merchants of Boston entered into a compact not to import goods from England till the revenue laws were altered, and this resolution was renewed in the beginning of 1770. In January of the latter year, this town, in public meeting, tendered a vote of thanks to those merchants. But in the year following, they began to take more effective measures to meet any emergency. They voted to purchase an hundred weight of powder, with bullets and flints in proportion. Little as that quantity might now seem, it was, in view of the whole powder in the Province, by no means an inconsiderable amount.

The year 1772 passed with comparative quiet, so far as this town was concerned. But in January 1773, the people were called together to consider a letter from the town of Boston, with a pamphlet accompanying it, "wherein the rights of the colonists are stated, with the infringement thereof."

This paper, from the pen of James Otis, was sent to the several towns in the Province, and was a bold and able vindication of the course pursued by the Colonies, and a manly appeal to their patriotism.

The town adopted five spirited resolutions, in which, after fully recognizing their allegiance to George III., they assert their right to enjoy all the liberties and privileges of subjects born within the realm, and their readiness to risk their lives and fortunes for the maintenance of these. And, in terms equally explicit, *they deny that the British Parliament or any other power on earth had any right to dispose of one farthing of their money without their consent in person or by representative.* In their instructions to their representative, on that occasion, after recapitulating the grievances under which the country was suffering, they close in these terms: "We think

ourselves justly entitled to all the calamities which an envious despot can heap upon us, should we, tamely and pusillanimously, suffer the execution of them. It would be despising the bounties of our Creator—an infamous prostitution of ourselves, and a total disregard of posterity."

This was indeed strong language to be uttered by a body of farmers, scattered over the territory of an inland town more than two years before a hostile blow had been struck. But it did but echo the tone of feeling which pervaded the whole mass of the people. Nor was this expression any the less sincere from the consideration that they were removed from the scene where the vengeance of the government was likely first to fall.

It was, indeed, a matter of little moment to them, whether a penny more or less per pound was charged upon the tea they consumed. But they saw in the levy of that penny, a great principle involved, and they hesitated not to meet the invasion of their rights at its earliest point, though it came from the monarch whom they had been taught to revere, and armed with the terrors of the British empire.

On the 27th November, 1773, a number of ships freighted with tea arrived in Boston harbor. On the 16th of December, was the memorable destruction of their odious cargoes. On the 27th of December the people of this district assembled, and adopted measures not only to prevent the use of tea, by personal pledges, but to prevent its sale, by publishing the names of any who dared to outrage public sentiment by engaging in such a traffic.

The destruction of the tea was followed, in March 1774, by the Boston Port Bill, which struck a fatal blow

to the trade and business of Boston. That town appealed to the other towns in the Province, on the 12th of May, which was replied to by the people of this town in a noble letter, all of which I would gladly transcribe if time permitted. "*The cause,*" they say, "*is interesting to all America, and all America must be convinced of this great truth, by uniting we shall stand. We hope, and believe that Great Britain will be soon convinced that the Americans can live as long without their trade, as they can without ours.*"

The year 1774 was full of stirring events. The revolution was coming to its crisis. A town meeting was held here on the 6th July, and a manifesto adopted, wherein they recite a history of their connection with the mother country, the position in which they then were, in respect to their rights, and the perils by which they were surrounded. "At a meeting of the freeholders" it commences, "of the inhabitants of the town of Leicester and the districts of Spencer and Paxton, assembled, not tumultuously, riotously, and seditiously, but soberly and seriously — as men, as freemen, and as christians, to take into our consideration the present distressed state of our affairs, that posterity may know what our claims are, and to what struggles we are called in defence of them."

Among the resolutions which they adopted at that meeting, there is one which I shall venture to transcribe, even at the hazard of taxing your indulgence too far: "That it is the duty of every person whatever, arrived at years of discretion, as much as may be consistent with their business or occupation for the support of their families, to *associate together and discourse and inform themselves of their rights and privilcyes as men, as members of society — and by the English Constitution,* that they may not be imposed upon by those men who look upon

them with envy, and are using every art to deprive the laborious part of mankind of the fruits of their own labor, and wish to live in luxury on that of others."

Men who could, thus, coolly and deliberately examine into the question of their rights, were not likely to waste their zeal in mere abstract propositions. And we accordingly find them, at the same time, voting to have their cannon mounted, and directing the selectmen to take measures to furnish all the citizens with fire-arms.

It was early in October of that year, that the authority of the royal governor, in administering the affairs of the Province, was practically and forever abrogated. From that time till the 19th of July, 1775, the Commonwealth was without any constitutional form of government. But the history of this interval is full of interest, as illustrating the character of the people. Civil government went on, civil society maintained its integrity, and the recommendations of the Provincial Congress became imperative as laws, by the power of public sentiment, enforced through the primary assemblies of the people in the several towns. Leicester and its associated districts were represented in the Provincial Congress, and as early as October, 1774, six months before the battle of Lexington, they instructed their representative in that body, to have measures taken that the militia should be properly disciplined and "*taught the art of war with all expedition, as we know not how soon we may be called to action.*"

In November, they voted to provide two half barrels of powder and four hundred weight of balls, as ammunition for their cannon, and raised a committee "to supply those persons with provisions, *who might be called to march from home in defence of their rights and privileges.*"

Paxton, in August of the same year, had voted to purchase a barrel of powder in addition to the stock which she had then on hand.

In January, 1775, I believe, each of these towns raised a company of "minute men" by a draft from their standing militia companies, to be ready to march at the earliest alarm. Everything gave dreadful note of preparation. They not only saw that the storm was gathering, but they saw it must speedily burst upon the land. And, yet, we find no doubt or misgiving in the minds of those upon whom it was to fall. On the 5th of March, this town held a meeting and adopted a vote, "*that as it is probable some interesting events may turn up between this and May meeting, each minute man be allowed the sum of six shillings as a bounty for his service, and if called upon to march, to be allowed Province pay.*"

We have thus traced our fathers through that period which preceded the revolution, up to the point when they saw there was no retreat. When in the language of their vote, they saw that within sixty days "some interesting events might turn up," and when their minute men "might be called to march." In all this we see no sudden outbreak, no manifestation of passion. All is calm, deliberate, and decided. They seem to have carefully calculated the cost, and in view of all the consequences, to have resolved to meet them in whatever form they came.

We may perhaps, be the better able to estimate the character of the courage which these men evinced, if we stop a moment and contemplate their condition at the time. Boston, their capitol, the seat of the little trade of the Province, was thronging with British troops. British ships of war lay at her wharves ready at the first hostile movement, to batter down that

hot-bed of the revolution. Not a fortification, nor even a breastwork protected the country from an inroad of these troops at any moment. The entire population of the Province was few and scattered. But when we look at these towns, the feebleness of their resources becomes more apparent, even, than that of the Province. In 1765, Leicester had but two hundred and ten men above the age of sixteen, including that part of her territory set off to Paxton. Spence had but one hundred and sixty. In 1777, these had increased only to two hundred and fifty-seven, in Spencer, two hundred and twelve, in Leicester, and one hundred and sixteen, in Paxton. Even as late as 1781, the whole number borne upon the rolls of the "train bands" of the three towns together, exclusive of the "alarm list," was less than three hundred men.

But their supply of warlike stores was less, even, than that of men. Leicester had provided herself with about two barrels of powder, Paxton had something more than one, and Spence, probably, as much. In May, 1775, shortly before the affair at Bunker's Hill, the Provincial Congress took measures to ascertain what quantities of powder belonged to the several towns in Massachusetts, and how much they would be able to contribute for the public service. The result of the investigation was, that less than sixty-eight barrels was all they could command in the whole Province, and of these, Leicester contributed one.

No wonder they had to be sparing of their ammunition in their first great struggle with the enemy. No wonder they were obliged to retreat, while yet victory seemed ready to crown their devoted courage. The wonder is that they should have dared, with such resources, to have resisted at all. The idea of entering

into a contest of arms with a power like that of England, could only have been entertained by men who, relying upon the justice of their cause and the favor of a gracious Providence, resolved to stand by that cause, whatever might be the hazard.

The scenes around us here, often witnessed, during the early stages of the revolutionary struggle, exhibitions of courage and self-devotion, which only needed a wider stage to have made their actors worthy of a place in the pages of its history.

Go with me and stand on the little common that lay east of the meeting-house, as it then was situated, and watch that devoted band of "minute men," in their almost daily drill, under the direction of a foreign soldier whom they had hired to teach them evolutions which they were so soon to apply in the camp and in the field. Side by side you would see the stripling youth and the veteran with gray hairs; side by side, the father who had brought home scars from battles in the old French wars, and the son who, for the first time, had shouldered a musket. There they stand with the fire of youth and the coolness of age strangely mingled in them both, to fit them for the work upon which they know they are so soon to enter.

Or let us enter that ancient meeting-house, without porch or ornament, and lighted by its little windows of diamond glass, during some of the numerous meetings that were held to consider what was to be done "in that critical conjuncture." It is filled by eager, listening spectators, while their rights as Englishmen and their wrongs as freemen are portrayed with the eloquence of truth. Whom do we see in that assembly? A body of farmers, a few mechanics, two or three traders, as many physicians, and their clergyman, who has come

to crave for them the blessings of Heaven upon their deliberations and their cause. Among them, too, are those who had fought under the good old Provincial flag of Massachusetts Bay, side by side with the troops of England, at Fort Edward, and William Henry, and Crown Point. I listen to the debate as one after another rises to utter the emotions of deep feeling and stern resolve with which that whole assembly is moved. There is no discordant voice there. If there is a tory in either of these towns, he is not there. One motive, one sympathy animates them all, and when, in the impassioned language of some of these "village Hampdens," the fearful alternative is presented, to yield or fight, there is heard a response from every heart which scorns the coward's choice — *they will fight*, fight though England, their mother country, with all her array of fleets and armies — in all the pride of her power, and in all the prestige of her centuries of glory, was to be their foe!

Go read the records of what those men did, and see if this picture has been overcolored in the least, and then show me if you can, in the history of the world, examples of moral grandeur more worthy of admiration than what our fathers, unconsciously, exhibited in their humble gatherings on this very spot! Aye! and be it remembered that every pledge they then gave was nobly, sacredly redeemed. Few, feeble, poor as they were, there was never a call, be it for men or be it for money, which was not promptly answered until that long, dreadful struggle was over.

But I perceive that I am anticipating. The forebodings indicated by the vote which I have just now recited, were realized. An "*event* did turn up before May meeting." It was the opening scene in the great drama of the revolution. Blood had been shed at Lexington

and Concord. The British troops harassed, discomfited, and disheartened, had sought shelter in Boston from the awakened vengeance of an outraged yeomanry. The sword had been drawn that was never to be sheathed till Massachusetts, with her sister Colonies, had taken their stand among the independent nations of the earth.

In this the people of these towns were by no means passive spectators. I have already spoken of the companies of "minute men," which they had organized. That of Leicester had been placed under the command of Seth Washburn, who took an early and an active part in the affairs of the revolution. The plan of organizing bodies of men like these, is said to have originated with colonel William Henshaw, of this town, who became the commandant of the regiment of minute men to which the Leicester company was attached. The company in Spencer was a part of colonel Warner's regiment, while that of Paxton belonged to the regiment of which colonel Doolittle, of Petersham, had the command.

The military stores of the Province had been deposited in different places for the purposes of safety and convenience. Among them a quantity of ammunition and tents had been ordered by the Provincial Congress to be stored in Leicester, a larger quantity in Worcester, and a still larger one in Concord.

It was understood, as early as the 30th March, that a descent was contemplated by the British troops upon some point in the country for the purpose of seizing or destroying these stores. But where the blow was to fall no one knew. At length all uncertainty was removed. A detachment of nearly a thousand men left their quarters, in Boston, about ten o'clock on the night of the

18th April, and between four and five o'clock the next morning, the head of their column reached Lexington. But their march had not been unobserved. The alarm spread upon the wings of the wind through the Province. Wherever there were bells, they were heard ringing out an alarm, and where there were none, the people were aroused by discharges of musketry and the hurrying haste of messengers shouting, as they passed, that the enemy were on their march. So alive were the people to the intelligence, and so rapidly was it spread, that few and slow as were the ordinary means of intercourse at that day, I suppose there was not a man within an hundred miles of Cambridge that did not know before nightfall that the British troops had marched that morning for Concord. It was like the summoning of the Scottish clans among the Highlands.

“Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise,
From winding glen, from upland brown,
They pour'd each hardy tenant down.
Nor slack'd the messenger his pace,
He showed his sign, he named the place
And pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamor and surprise behind.”

An express rider reached here soon after noon, on the 19th. He found the captain of the minute company at his forge. Dropping a ploughshare, upon which he was at work, he seized his musket and rushing into the street discharged it. The signal was understood and messengers were at once on their way to every part of the town, to summon the troops to march. Not a man of the company hesitated. The mechanic literally left his tools on his bench, and the farmer his plough in the furrow, and in about three hours time thirty-seven had answered to

the roll-call. William Watson and Nathaniel Harrod were the first and second lieutenants of the company. A messenger had been sent to Worcester, that day, for an additional supply of arms for the men. But, without waiting for his return, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, they took up their march for Lexington. On their way they halted for a moment before the house of the father* of one of the members of the company, and he, finding that they were deficient in musket balls, hastily took the leaden weights from his clock, and melting them into bullets, distributed them among the men.

There was another military company in town, of which Thomas Newhall, was captain, and Benjamin Richardson and Ebenezer Upham, lieutenants. Of this company thirty-five, including the officers, without waiting for formal orders, volunteered their services and soon followed in the rear of the "minute men," thus making in all seventy-two who were under arms and in full march before sundown of the 19th April, 1775, to meet the enemy wherever he should be found.

But Leicester was not alone in this. Spencer sent fifty-six men under the command of captain Ebenezer Mason, with Abijah Livermore, as lieutenant, and Joseph Livermore, as ensign. A company from Paxton promptly answered the call, with thirty-five men, under the command of captain Phinehas Moore, whose lieutenants were Josiah Newton and Seth Snow. The history of Spencer,† in describing this event, says that the company from that town, "buckled on their knapsacks, shouldered their muskets and were immediately on their march. And although the town had not met to make provision for the exigency, yet the good wives

* Nathan Sargent, whose son Samuel belonged to the company.

† By Hon. James Draper.

of the soldiers, with the assistance of the selectmen, furnishing them with a hasty and imperfect supply of provisions, they marched quickly for Cambridge."

But language is altogether inadequate to do justice to the event. I have sometimes tried to call up before the mind the scene which was witnessed on this spot on the afternoon of the 19th April, 1775. I see the men who had been thus hastily summoned, eagerly pressing on towards the place of rendezvous on foot or on horse-back, (for there were few or no carriages here then,)* by the various roads and by-paths that led into the straggling village of some eight or ten houses that stretched, to the east and west of the meeting-house, for some half mile along what was then called "the country road." I hear the rapid beat of the drum as it calls the men to arms, and listen for an answer to the hurried roll-call, as one after another reaches the parade ground, and takes his place in the ranks. But it is no holiday parade. There is nothing to dazzle the eye in the dress or equipments of either officers or men. Not one of them wears either ornament or military decoration. Some are even destitute of guns, and the equipments of the captain himself are a simple cartouch-box and musket that had seen service in the wars of the former Georges.

There are others, too, than soldiers, clustering around and mingling with the men who are busily preparing to march. Wives and mothers are there, and gray-haired fathers, and children looking, with wondering eyes, upon this scene of strange commotion. I hear the parting charge and the parting blessing, and as the last man reaches his post, the word is given, and that little band of brave men have begun their march.

* In 1757, there was neither coach, chaise, nor chair in Leicester.

I will not attempt to describe the feelings of the groups that lingered gazing on the receding forms of that company, till its last file had disappeared below the brow of yonder hill, and the last sound of the drum-beat had died on the ear.

"It was I assure you," said a daughter of the commander of that company, within a few weeks, "an anxious and an exciting moment. The people retired to their homes, but I doubt if there was an eye closed in the village that night. Soon after dark the Spencer men passed by, and before morning we heard the company from Brookfield in rapid march for Lexington."

Let me close the attempt to picture that scene, by this simple recital of the excited emotions of childhood, still fresh in the memory of a living witness, after a lapse of more than three score years and ten.

There was one among those who witnessed the incidents of that day, who was an Englishman by birth, education, and feeling.* He was a physician, eminent in his profession, and then a resident here. With his strong national prejudices, the idea of resisting the British crown was little short of madness. But when he saw, from what he then witnessed, the feeling that pervaded the whole community, and men like these eagerly courting the dangers and privations of the common soldier, his incredulity gave way—"by heaven," said he, "*they will fight*, and what is more, *they wont be beat!*" And the prophecy, thus reluctantly wrung from him, was in less than two months in the sure progress of fulfilment.

The companies from this town continued their march all night. Every house which they passed had lights burning in the windows to cheer on the troops that

* Dr. Honeywood.

were hastening from every quarter towards Lexington. Nor did they halt till they learned that the British had retreated into Boston. They then repaired to Cambridge, where they lay till a new organization of the Provincial troops was effected.*

Several officers of higher grade than those already mentioned, were resident in these towns, and were equally prompt in repairing to the scene of action. Colonel William Henshaw, the commandant of one of the regiments, Samuel Denny, its lieutenant-colonel, and John Southgate, its adjutant, all belonged to Leicester. Joseph Henshaw, another citizen of the town, was lieutenant-colonel of a regiment commanded by colonel, afterwards general Artemas Ward, of Shrewsbury, whose adjutant was James Hart, who, I suppose, was a resident in what is now Auburn. And Willard Moore, of Paxton, was the major of colonel Doolittle's regiment.

The Provincial Congress had adjourned on the 15th of April, but were called together again on the 22d, three days after the affair at Lexington. On the 23d, they resolved to raise an army of 13,600 men from Massachusetts, for the defence of the Province.

Enlisting orders were at once issued, and on the 24th, captain Washburn entered into what was called "the eight months' service," and was joined, within a few days, by thirty-eight from Leicester, nine from Spencer, three from Paxton, and five from Oakham. Joseph Livermore, of Spencer, and Loring Lincoln, of Leicester, were the first and second lieutenants of the company. It was soon raised to sixty-four men, and was attached to the regiment under the command of colonel Jonathan Ward, of Southboro', whose lieutenant-colonel and major

* They seem, while there, to have been attached to colonel Artemas Ward's regiment.

were Edward Barns, of Southboro', and Timothy Bigelow, of Worcester. Seven other Leicester men joined other companies in the same service, as did eleven of captain Moore's men. Captain Joel Green, of Spencer, raised a company at the same time, of which forty belonged to that town. It was attached to colonel Larned's regiment, of Oxford. The remainder of the troops who had marched on the 19th, after remaining in camp two or three weeks, returned to their homes. But they did not all remain inactive. Jason Livermore, of Paxton, raised a part of a company on his return home, with which he marched to Charleston, on Connecticut river, and from thence to Ticonderoga, where he joined the northern army under the command of general Schuyler.

William Henshaw was made adjutant-general of the Provincial army at Cambridge, and remained such until it was put under the command of general Washington in the Continental service.

The men who enlisted from these towns were probably similar in character, and dress, and discipline, to the rest of the army under general Ward, and the experiment was soon to be tried whether raw, undisciplined, ill-equipped and ill-provided soldiers could stand before the flower of the British army, led on by her choicest and bravest officers.

I have already said they wore no uniforms. Colonel Prescott himself, the hero of the 17th of June, and the principal commander during the battle, is well known to have been clad in a calico frock on that occasion. Sixteen only of captain Washburn's company received supplies, either of clothing or arms, from the public stores. The rest supplied themselves at their own charge. For arms, some of them had mere fowling-pieces, and some carried those heavy cumbrous pieces

which we used to see under the name of "king's" or "queen's arms," from their having been in service during the wars of queen Anne, or the two first Georges. Like the rest of the army they were all sadly deficient in bayonets, a circumstance of most serious consequence to our cause when, at the battle of Bunker Hill, our troops found their ammunition exhausted, and themselves destitute of all means of repelling the enemy, as they were mounting the breastwork and the redoubt, except the butts of their muskets.

The dress in which the men had come into the camp, must have been such as they had been accustomed to wear in their work-shops, and upon their farms at home, and, in the then state of manufactures, was undoubtedly the product of the domestic loom, and colored with some domestic dye by the hand of the frugal housewife. The dress of the captain happened to be a camlet coat, and as he led on his men in their homespun, parti-colored garbs, the picture which they presented might have well furnished the original of that which recently appeared in one of the popular periodicals of the day.*

"In their ragged regiments,
Stood the old Continentals,
Yielding not,
When the grenadiers were lunging,
And like hail fell the plunging
Cannot shot:
When the files
Of the isles,
From the smoky night-encampment, bore the banner of the rampant
Unicorn,
And grummer, grummer, grummer, rolled the roll of the drummer,
Through the morn !"

At length the trial came. On the night of the 16th of June, 1775, a detachment from the Americanr amy

* New York Knickerbocker,

were directed to occupy and throw up entrenchments upon Bunker Hill, pursuant to a recommendation of a committee, of which colonel William Henshaw, was chairman, on the part of the council of war. As soon as they were discovered by the enemy, on the morning of the 17th, they began to take measures to dislodge the Americans by an attack upon their lines. The British crossed the river, and, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the battle began.

To reach Bunker Hill from the American camp in Cambridge, it was necessary, as you are all aware, to cross a narrow neck of land which was, at that time, raked by the guns of the British frigate Glasgow, which lay in the stream. It was, therefore, scarcely less dangerous to approach the hill, than to man the works which the enemy were endeavoring to carry by assault. Both these dangers were shared by the Leicester company. I cannot better describe the part they took in the transactions of that day, than in the simple narrative of some of the actors in its never to be forgotten scenes. Of that company, however, one only remains,* and he has been spared for more than seventy-four years to share the fruits of that glorious struggle for liberty in which he bore a part. The regiment was stationed at what is called "Fort No. 2," upon the plans which we sometimes see of the works on and around Bunker Hill. Its colonel was absent on that day, and the command devolved upon lieutenant-colonel Barns. They were ordered to march, and left their quarters about noon. Before reaching the neck, they were halted and remained in that position for a considerable time. At length they resumed the march, and, rapidly crossing the neck, reached the foot of the hill some time after the

* Nathan Craige.

action had begun. A messenger here met them stating that he had orders that no more troops should go into the action. The regiment was accordingly halted, but the captain of the Leicester men, stepping from the column and addressing his men declared in a loud voice, that "orders like them must be tory orders, and he would not obey them." He then demanded who of them would follow him? The answer was a movement of the entire company, every one of whom quitting the ranks of the regiment, eagerly pressed on to the hill under the lead of their commander. On their way, they met loads of wounded and dying soldiers whom the Americans were bringing from the field. As they reached the top of the hill, the enemy had made their last fatal charge upon the American lines, and were about surmounting the breastwork and entering the redoubt. It was just before major Pitcairn, of the British army, had been shot down by a black soldier, by the name of Peter Salem, whom many of us remember as having been a resident in this town for many years. The captain here turned to his men, and pointing to the scene of carnage before them, and the evident fate of the battle, gave to all, who wished, free permission to leave the field. Not one, however, availed himself of the liberty, but rushing forward into the midst of the fight, they took their stand at the rail fence, and fought with desperate courage, till nearly surrounded by the enemy, when, with the other troops, they withdrew from the field.

But the anecdotes which are told of their retreat, show that it was anything but a flight from fear. One of the sergeants* received a shot in the thigh and another in the foot, which disabled him from walking. The

* John Brown.

captain, seeing this, seized him in his arms, and carried him, together with both their muskets, till his strength failed. The wounded man insisted upon being left, and the captain hastening after his men, overtook a brother and a neighbor of the sergeant,* and sent them back to bring him off the field, which they did in the face of the enemy's fire. Two others of the company were wounded,† but not severely, and none were killed. Several received balls through their clothes. Among them, the captain had a ball shot into his cartouch-box, one through his wig, and four through his coat. One of the company‡ had cultivated a long appendage to his head in the form of a *quieu*, with as much affection as a modern exquisite nurses the hairy excrescence that sprouts from his chin or upper lip. It had been carefully braided and fastened into two strands, but upon coming out of the action he was sadly disturbed to find that one of these had been unceremoniously shorn close to his head, by an envious bullet from one of king George's men. Another of the men § found the head of his canteen had been perforated by a ball which had taken the place of the contents it had discharged upon the ground, and was long preserved as a trophy of the fight.

One other of the men || who had provided himself, among other creature comforts, with a small quantity of rum, which he carried in a canteen at his side, perceived, while on his retreat, that a ball from the enemy had cut the string by which it hung. Looking for the canteen, he discovered it in rapid progress towards the enemy who were approaching by a flank movement. With a desperate determination that "he would be *darned* if the regulars should have his rum," he coolly

* Perley Brown and Jonathan Sargent. † Wm. Crossman and Kerley Ward. ‡ Daniel Hubbard. § Samuel Sargent. || Isaac Livermore.

turned and followed his canteen, till he overtook it, and then brought it off amidst a shower of bullets that whistled around him.

I shall be pardoned, I trust, for indulging in trifling anecdotes like these, for they serve to show the character of the courage and self-possession of those who, on that day, mingled for the first time in scenes of conflict, carnage, and death. But the dangers and hardships of a soldier's life were not new or altogether strange to some of that company. I have already alluded to the part which so many of the men of that day had taken in the French and Indian wars in which the Province had been involved.

The captain had been in the service of the crown more than twenty-five years prior to that time, and others of the company had had a practical lesson what war was in the memorable campaign of 1757, at Crown Point and Fort Wm. Henry.*

There was one, too, from this vicinity, whose untimely fate on that day ought not to be forgotten on this occasion. Major Willard Moore, belonged to Paxton, but lived just beyond the original line of the town of Leicester. Far less is known of his personal history than his gallant conduct and death would seem to demand. He was, I suppose, a farmer, as were most of the men who fought in the American ranks at Bunker Hill. I find he had been an ensign of a company in 1767. When the minute men were organised, he was made a major of one of the regiments, under the command of colonel Doolittle, and at the time of the Lexington alarm hastened to Cambridge. Here a new regiment was raised, under the command of the same colonel, and major

* Among these were Perley Brown and James Greaton. Ebenezer Saunderson was in the army in 1761.



Moore was commissioned, by the Provincial Congress, to the same place he had held in his former regiment. He came early, with his men, into the battle of the 17th June, and took a prominent post of danger. In consequence of the absence of his colonel, the command of the regiment had that day devolved upon him.

In the second charge of the enemy upon our lines, he was shot through the thigh and fell. His men were carrying him from the field when he received another ball through the body. The wound was a mortal one, though not immediately so. It was an exceedingly hot day, and he suffered dreadfully from thirst. No water could be had, short of the Neck, and two of his men, leaving him upon the field, went in pursuit of it to relieve his sufferings. On their return the American troops were just leaving the redoubt in their retreat. His men offered to carry him from the field, but, with the self-sacrifice of true heroism, he bade them save themselves, and leave him to his fate. He fell in that first great struggle of the revolution, in the cause of his country and mankind. And so long as the glorious day, that declared that country independent, shall be remembered, his name should live in the record of her history.

While their brothers were in the field, the citizens of these towns were, by no means, inactive or indifferent spectators of the passing events. On the 13th July, 1775, they met to elect a representative to the general assembly, which was about to convene, and in instructions of considerable length, expressed their views of the then state of public affairs. "At this most critical and important period," say they, "on which are suspended the happiness or ruin of British America, you are called, by the suffrages of your townsmen, to repre-

sent them in the ensuing general assembly of this Province. To this important *now* posterity will look back either with joy and admiration, secure in the possession of their inestimable liberties, or with the keenest sensations of grief while they drag the galling chain of servitude. Since the settlement of America no period has been so replete with great and interesting events as the present, and it will require the utmost exertions of the human mind to counteract the designs of the enemy."

But time compels me to forego the pleasure of transcribing the just and noble sentiments which are embodied in those instructions. It was the last occasion when these towns acted together in general meeting. From that period the history of their efforts in the common cause was distinct, and I greatly regret that imperfect as my knowledge of the sacrifices made by either of them is, so far as it extends, it is principally confined to one, only, of them. But judging from the spirit with which, to that date, they had co-operated, I have no reason to suppose that there was any stronger patriotism in any one than was to be found in them all. If there was any apparent prominence in one over the others it was probably the result of accident. It so happened that several individuals in Leicester were not only spirited and influential men themselves, but were connected with Boston through family relations, or by having, themselves, resided there, and consequently were early apprised of the measures which were contemplated, from time to time, at the fountain head of the political movements of the day. This was the case with Thomas Denny, a prominent man in the Province, who died just as the revolution began. So it was the case with the two colonels Henshaw, Joseph and Wil-

liam, as well as with the late Hon. Joseph Allen, to whose pens, I have reason to believe, the town owe many of the able and patriotic resolutions and instructions to their representatives, which are preserved in her records.*

I should have been glad to give, in detail, the number of men and the amount of moneys raised by each of these towns, to carry on the war. But, unfortunately, I can only approximate the truth in regard to either of them. Even what does appear of record, now seems utterly incredible, if it were not fully sustained by the uniform testimony of witnesses who have, till within a few years, been alive and amongst us. I do not believe there is another nation in the world who ever met, with such limited means, such heavy, systematic, and repeated drafts of men and money for such a length of time as did Massachusetts. She was, as I have already said,¹ comparatively poor, and thinly peopled. Yet, for eight long years, she continued to pour out the blood and treasure of her sons without stint and without one serious thought of shrinking.

* Thomas Denny was the son of Daniel, who came from England, and was an early settler in Leicester, and whose sister was wife of the Rev. Dr. Prince, of Boston. He was born in 1724, and died October 23, 1774, while a member of the Provincial Congress. His brother Samuel was the lieutenant-colonel of a regiment of minute men as already stated. He was also called into the service at Claverack, in 1777, as colonel of a regiment of the militia. He married a sister of colonel Henshaw.

The Henshaws were the sons of Daniel Henshaw, who removed to Leicester, in 1748, from Boston, where the sons above named, as well as his son David, were born. They all sustained important civil relations and were among the most prominent men in the town. William entered the army, as a lieutenant, at as early an age as 21, in what was known as one of the "French wars," under Lord Amherst. He was actively engaged as a lieutenant-colonel, and a part of the time as commandant of a regiment during the year 1766-7, on Long Island, where he took an important part in the battle of the 27th August, and afterwards with general Washington, in his passage of the Delaware, and at the battles of Trenton and Princeton. He died in 1820.

Mr. Allen removed from Boston to Leicester, in November, 1771, where he was engaged in business, as a merchant, until 1776, when he was appointed clerk of the courts, and removed to Worcester.

The number of what were known as the Continental troops, furnished by Massachusetts, amounted, upon an average, to more than eight thousand every year during the war. Or, if we regard them as having each done service for a single year, their number would be at least sixty-eight thousand. This was exclusive of fifteen thousand of the militia which were called into the service at different times during the war; and this out of a population where the whole number of males, above sixteen years of age, scarcely exceeded seventy-five thousand.

The proportion of the expenses of the war, which was borne by Massachusetts, was greater, I apprehend, even than that of the number of her men.

Commissioners were appointed, after the peace, to settle the amounts of the several states for expenses incurred in the war, and the amount allowed by them to Massachusetts was but a fraction from \$18,000,000. But this sum must have fallen very much below the total amount expended by her, if the sums contributed by towns and individuals, in sustaining the struggle, of which no account was ever rendered, were embraced in the computation. And this amount, it ought to be remembered, was raised in about eight years by a state whose ratable polls never, during the time, exceeded seventy-seven thousand.

What proportion of these was furnished by these towns, can never be accurately known. From returns preserved among the records of Leicester, I find that there were twenty-eight drafts for men made upon this town, between May, 1775, and July, 1781, and that to answer these, two hundred and fifty-four men were at different times furnished for the service during that period. This number, however, does not include the seventy-two who marched at the time of the Lexington alarm. Nor does

it include those who enlisted into the "Continental service" for the term of three years, or during the war, nor the men who were supplied by the "classes" into which the town was divided in 1781, for the purpose of procuring complements of troops as they were required. How many there were of these I have not been able to ascertain. I find, however, the names of thirty belonging to the town, who, I have reason to believe, enlisted into the Continental army, for at least three years, during thirteen months, in 1777 and '78.* Many other names of her citizens are found upon the rolls of the army, and we may easily imagine that their number was not small when we remember how many were to be met with here, a few years since, who could tell what they did, and saw, and suffered at White Plains, and Trenton, and Monmouth, and Valley Forge.

If we assume these premises as the basis of calculation, it would, I think, be found that, if we consider each term of service as having been performed by a distinct set of men, there were more soldiers drawn from this town during the period of the war, than there were males residing here above the age of sixteen years, and more than double the whole number of names borne upon the rolls of its train bands. So large were these drafts, and so often repeated, that committees were raised by the town to go into other towns to hire men to supply them. And it became necessary, repeatedly, to elect new town officers because so many of those who had been elected were absent in the army. Indeed, so difficult did it at last become to procure men to fill the quotas which were required of the town, that bounties as high as £30 each,

* Among them William Crossman became a lieutenant, and Joseph Washburn, ensign, of a company in colonel Bigelow's regiment, in January, 1777. Crossman soon left the service, and Washburn was made lieutenant of the company.

were paid in silver to those who were willing to enlist. It was to obviate this difficulty and relieve the town of the heavy charge, that the principle of conscription or classing the inhabitants was adopted, whereby what had been the duty of the whole, devolved upon a certain number of its inhabitants, who were obliged to procure the requisite number of soldiers as they were needed from time to time. How many were furnished by classes in this town or at what expense, I have not, as I have already said, been able to determine.

Nor have I any reason to suppose that Spencer or Paxton were any less liberal than Leicester in the aid which they furnished to the cause of their country. I find bounties paid by Spencer to thirty men, between January, 1777, and February, 1778, who had joined the Continental army, and to seven more soon after, who had enlisted from that town into the same service. Paxton furnished seventeen men who joined the Continental troops during the year '77. I cannot fix the proportion, if any, which prevailed in the numbers which were at different times levied from these towns. But I find that in 1780, when a draft was made for "six months' men," Leicester furnished seventeen, Spencer eighteen, Paxton *ten*, and Auburn (then Ward) four, of the requisite number. Where, indeed, shall we look for a more signal manifestation of devoted self-sacrificing patriotism than is furnished by this simple detail of the numbers who went forth here, from their farms and firesides, to battle for their homes and their rights as freemen!

But it was not in the field or the camp alone, that the people of these towns were called upon for sacrifices and privations. Justice, I apprehend, never has been, and never will be done to those who remained at home, and contributed to sustain the burden of expense which the war created.

I say nothing of the sleepless nights and anxious days of the wives and mothers whose husbands and sons had left their homes desolate and their fields untilled ; I say nothing of the ceaseless toil of the women of the revolution to supply, from their own looms and handiwork, clothing for the army and comforts for the sick and wounded. I say nothing of the widows which that war made, nor of the mourning which was heard in almost every village over some friend, or brother, or son, who had fallen in battle, or been the victim of the pestilence which the camp, with its vices, and fevers, and destitutions, had generated. These are but the incidents of war, even in its mildest form, and it is as impossible to measure as it is vain to attempt to portray such scenes of individual suffering.

There is enough in the sacrifices which our father's made which can be measured by the ordinary standard of dollars and cents, to give us some idea of what that struggle cost them in treasure as well as suffering.

It is difficult, as all must be aware, to fix the precise extent of the taxation to which the people were subjected, from what we read in the records of the time, in consequence of the depreciation of paper money which formed the ordinay currency of the day. In ascertaining what the actual value of the sums of money was, which were raised by this town during the war, I have endeavored to apply what I supposed was as correct a scale as was within my reach.*

Applying this standard, I find that the town of Leices-
ter or its inhabitants, during the *six first* years of the
war, paid out in *the form of* BOUNTIES to soldiers, upon
their enlistment, more than *eleven thousand dollars*. And

* I have principally relied upon one, which is found in the history of Worcester, the accuracy of which all will concede, who recal the character of the author.

of this sum nearly *three thousand* were paid during the single year 1777.

Besides these sums, the town raised large amounts, from time to time, to aid in carrying on the war, the aggregate of which could have been scarcely if any less than seven thousand dollars — making, I doubt not, more than \$18,000 in money over and above their share of the taxes, which were levied by the state, to sustain the war or to pay the war debt. And this was contributed, by this single town, in the space of less than eight years. It ought to be remembered, moreover, that the town that did this was by no means a wealthy one. Out of two hundred and fifteen towns in Massachusetts proper, in the year 1772, one hundred and seven had a larger population and a higher valuation of property than Leicester, and among the towns in our own county, she ranked, at that time, no higher than the twentieth in either of these respects.

The amount furnished by Spencer, in bounties and supplies, to her Continental soldiers alone, was nearly three thousand dollars. The charge incurred by Paxton, for the same purpose, was about fourteen hundred dollars. But these sums do not cover the advances of money and other things which they made in behalf of the state troops and the expenses of the war, the amount of which I have no means of determining.

Nor were these, by any means, the whole burden which these towns were called upon to sustain. I find that in 1775, the Provincial Congress imposed upon the town of Leicester, the charge of supporting thirty-six of the inhabitants of Boston, who had fallen into distress by the ruin of their trade. I find its inhabitants voting to abate the taxes of those who were serving in the army.

I find them voting supplies for the families of the men who had enlisted here into the three years' Continental service. I find them providing clothing for their soldiers while absent from home. I find repeated drafts made by the board of war upon the keeper of military stores in this town,* during the years 1777 and 1778, for clothing for the army. For men obliged, as they were, to labor incessantly, the sacrifice they were called upon to make, in the mere matter of town meetings, was by no means slight. I find they were called together at least eighteen times during the single year 1774. Nor was this all. In May, 1780, they allowed one hundred and ten bushels of corn to every one of the soldiers who would relinquish his wages. In January, 1781, they raised more than four hundred dollars, for the purchase of beef for the army, and in July, of the same year, they furnished, as their proportionate supply for a single month, one thousand pounds of beef for the same use.

I might swell the number of these votes and appropriations which are scattered through the pages of their records. But, were I to do so, I should feel that I was trespassing too severely upon your indulgence. Make whatever abatement we may, from any of these sums, on account of any supposed error in the scale of depreciation which we are to apply, it seems all but incredible how such burdens could have been borne by a town, the whole of whose ordinary expenses before the war, for the support of their highways, their poor, their schools, and contingent charges, seem not to have exceeded two hundred pounds by the year.

And, yet, while staggering under the enormous burdens of the war, when it was proposed in town meeting to suspend their schools, the proposition was at once

* Seth Washburn.

rejected. And to their glory be it said, neither their schools nor their sanctuary were closed from any refusal on the part of the people, to meet the necessary expenses, during the whole of that dark period.

Nor ought it to be overlooked, that this crushing weight fell, principally, upon the men who remained at home. And when we recollect besides, that this was almost entirely an agricultural community, we may be ready to believe the traditionary anecdotes which we have heard, of the desperate straits to which many were driven, to meet the demands which were thus made upon their industry — small farmers obliged to part with almost the last animal in their stalls—to divide the little crops of grain they had raised, with the tax-gatherer, and often to stint themselves and families in the very necessities of life, that they might feed and clothe the men who were fighting their battles, or sustain the families which they had left to be cared for by their fellow townsmen.

Full of interest, as incidents like these may be regarded, as matters of local history, and happy as I should have been to present a complete narrative of the events of the war in which the officers and men who resided in these towns took a part, I am reminded by the length of time I have already consumed, that I can pursue the subject no farther.

And yet enough has been exhibited to show that men and women who could cheerfully make all these sacrifices, rather than submit to the tax of a penny, unconstitutionally laid, would not be found shrinking, when the proposition came for declaring these Colonies *independent*. It was a bold act in the Congress of 1776, to publish such a declaration to the world, but they did but utter the determined will of the whole people, when

they made it. The nation was ready for it before Jefferson penned that immortal instrument. On the 22d of May, 1776, a town meeting was called in this town, which was shortly after convened, in which it was *unanimously voted*, “*that in case the honorable Continental Congress should declare the Colonies independent of Great Britain, they would support said Congress in effectuating such a measure, at the risk of their lives and fortunes.*”

Spencer adopted a similar resolution on the 24th June, of the same year.

How far they redeemed this solemn pledge, when in July that declaration came, let the facts, to which I have already alluded, bear witness. God in his mercy crowned their efforts with success, and we, their sons, are now celebrating amidst these scenes of beauty, and thrift, and comfort, the Independence which they vowed to sustain, amidst gloom, and poverty, and weakness.

But there were other respects in which they showed themselves fit to be free men than their courage and self-sacrifice in sustaining the war. They presented a moral spectacle as striking as the extent of their physical endurance.

I have already alluded to the fact, that for more than nine months, the state was without any constitutional government to make or enforce laws. The body known as the “Provincial Congress,” was but a convention of influential citizens, whose acts had no binding force beyond the favor with which they were received by an intelligent public. And yet, I have sought, in vain, for any evidence that there ever was a time in either of these towns, during that interval, when the voice of justice was silent, or order and domestic quiet did not prevail under the sanction of law.

These towns were, in effect, independent little repub-

lies, where committees of vigilance, aided by a vigorous tone of moral sentiment in the community, restrained the passions of the bad and enforced the dictates of the public will. Anecdotes illustrative of this state of self-government might easily be gathered from the history of either of these towns. But time precludes me from attempting it now.

There is one other subject connected with the moral feeling of the people of that day, which I ought not wholly to omit, even at the hazard of wearying you still farther by these necessarily protracted remarks, and that is *slavery*.

It is probably known to us all that slavery once existed by law in this Commonwealth. Some of us are old enough to remember a few who were declared free by the constitution of 1780, but still continued to reside in the families of their former masters. But slavery never was in popular favor in Massachusetts. It had been imposed upon her by her connection with England, and though she struggled hard to rid herself of it, the crown interposed to prevent it. A majority of the legislature, in 1773, passed an act for the suppression of the slave trade, but governor Hutchinson, under direct orders from the crown, vetoed the bill. And it will be remembered that the first declaration which the people of Massachusetts made in their bill of rights, was that "all men are born *free*." The number of slaves in either of these towns must always have been very small. I do not find the returns of any at any time in Paxton. In 1755, Leicester had six, and Spencer three, and in '65, there were only seven black persons in Leicester, and but five in Spencer. With the exception of some half dozen slaves brought here by the Jews, upon their removal from Newport, I do not believe there were ten

in both towns together, at any time within ten years of the revolution. Nor was the relation which they held to the rest of the community such as to shock the sensibility of any one. They ate at the same table, worked in the same field, and wore the same homespun dress as their masters, and were rather the pets and favorites, especially of the younger members of the family, than objects, as in these modern days, for sprigs of chivalry to try their lessons upon, while fitting themselves to become rulers of free men.

Yet, even with all its mildness the institution of slavery was justly odious to our ancestors. Whatever may be said on the subject at this day, the *whigs* of that day were, I believe, to a man, for a "*free soil*." They anxiously sought to be rid of the disgrace which the existence of slavery entailed upon men professing to be free, and struggling to maintain their freedom.

I recur, with pride, to the record they have left in this town of their sentiments upon this subject. In their instructions to their representative, in May, 1773, they say, "*as we have the highest regard for, (so even as to revere the name of,) Liberty, we cannot behold but with the greatest abhorrence, any of our fellow creatures in a state of slavery. Therefore we strictly enjoin you to use your utmost influence that a stop may be put to the slave trade by the inhabitants of this Province.*"

Such were the sentiments then, and such, I thank God, are the sentiments *now* of the people of our glorious old Commonwealth, and such must they ever be, till she ceases to hold the rank she now does among the republics of the earth, for intelligence, enterprise, and moral power.

I deeply regret that I have been compelled, thus heavily, to tax your indulgence, while I am yet con-

scious of the injustice I have done to the subject and the occasion. Incidents which, at the time, were deemed unimportant, have grown to consequence by their connexion with events which, in their progress, have excited the admiration of the world. We are able to take a stand-point from which to view the events of the American Revolution in a light which the actors in its scenes, with all their foresight, could never have anticipated. We are witnessing the fruits of that movement which hurried our fathers in their march for Lexington, and nerved them to meet, unquailing, the serried ranks of a British army at Bunker Hill, in the tottering thrones and crumbling dynasties of the old world, and in the constantly widening spread of American principles in the new. We have reached that point in human progress, when fact outruns fancy, and the wildest dream of the most imaginative visionary of '76, has long since been left behind by the actual history of the race.

And, yet, so brief has been the period within which these changes have been wrought, that the span of a human life has measured them all. Six, who at one time or another, took part as soldiers, in the dangers, and sufferings, and triumphs of the revolution, from the ancient town of Leicester, are yet spared to share its fruits with us.* Some of them, we welcome to this jubilee — we greet them as the representatives of a noble race, now, alas! almost extinct amongst us.

Venerable man! the last of that little band who mustered on this spot, and took up their midnight march to find and to meet the invader — we welcome

* Austin Flint and Asahel Matthews, of Leicester, Nathan Craige, Joel Howe, Phinehas Jones, and Isaac Lamb, of Spencer. Mr. Craige, Matthews, Jones, and Howe were present. Mr. Craige was 95 years old.

your presence—we recognise in you one of the connecting links between the royal Province of Massachusetts Bay, and the honored equal of thirty independent republics. Where the fathers stood, side by side, with you, on the 19th April, 1775, the sons and the grandsons have come to do honor to their memories, and to thank God that there is yet one left to whom we can point our children, and say, it was such men who fought the battles of the revolution, and achieved the independence which we enjoy.

It is impossible to stand upon this spot, surrounded by such associations, without feeling one's spirit stirred within him. Fancy, unbidden, brings back its scenes of former days, and peoples it with the men who gathered, in council here, with anxious, earnest hearts, in the days that literally "tried men's souls." But it needs not the aid of fancy to read our duty in the light of their example. There comes a voice from the very graves of such men that speaks not to the dreaming ear, but the warm affections of every generous heart. It bids us stand by the ark of liberty which they bore through the toilsome march of the revolution, in safety and triumph. It bids us preserve, for our posterity, the priceless boon which they bequeathed to us. And when, in after days, our children shall gather here to celebrate this day, as we do now, let them have no cause to blush that we, their fathers, had been unfaithful to our father's trust.

A P P E N D I X.

A muster roll of captain Seth Washburn's company, in colonel Ward's regiment, who marched on the alarm, April 19, 1775. Those marked * joined the company from captain Newhall's, at Cambridge.

Seth Washburn, captain.

William Watson, first lieutenant.

Nathaniel Harrod, second lieutenant.

Samuel Watson and Henry King, sergeants.

Ebenezer Kent and Jonathan Newhall, corporals.

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Benjamin Convers, | * Elijah Comins, |
| Abner Dunbar, | Elias Green, |
| Thomas Parker, | * Israel Saunderson, |
| Ambrose Searl, | * John Weaver, |
| Jesse Green, | * Isaac Livermore, jr., |
| Jonas Southgate, | Jonathan Sargent, |
| Samuel Richardson, | Job Stetson, |
| Jesse Smith, | James Greaton, |
| Peleg Hersey, | Morris Huggins, |
| John Brown, | Nathan Craige, |
| William Crossman, | Phinehas Green, |
| Hezekiah Saunderson, | Perley Brown, |
| Daniel Hubbard, | * Stephen Taylor, |
| Abijah Stowers, | Samuel Sargent, |
| Adam Gilmore, | William Brown, |
| * David Newhall, | * Daniel Sargent, |
| Daniel Denny, | Jason Livermore, |
| Ebenezer Saunderson, | James Tucker. |
| Jonathan Jackson; | |

Roll of captain Thomas Newhall's company of militia, who marched from Leicester to Cambridge, on the alarm, the 19th of April, 1775.

Thomas Newhall, captain.

Benjamin Richardson, lieutenant.

Ebenezer Upham, second lieutenant.

Loring Lincoln, Isaac Choate, and James Whittemore, sergeants.

Phinehas Newhall and Phinehas Sargent, corporals.

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Peter Sylvester, jr., | Daniel Carpenter, |
| Jonathan Johnson, | Reuben Earle, |
| Nathaniel Richardson, | Wait Upham, |
| Moses Hovey, | Richard Bond, |
| Micah Livermore, | Reuben Swan, |
| Elijah Howe, | Solon Green, |
| Jonathan Sargent, jr., | Isaac Livermore, jr., |
| Elisha Ward, | Stephen Taylor, |
| Benjamin Levinston, | Daniel Sargent, |
| Thomas Snow, | Elijah Cummings, |
| Thomas Green, | Israel Saunderson, |
| Reuben Lamb, | John Weaver, |
| Phinehas Barton, | David Newhall. |
| Caleb Nichols, | |

A roll of captain Ebenezer Mason's company, who marched as minute men for the defence of the Colonies on the 19th April, 1775, from Spencer, belonging to colonel Jonathan Warner's regiment.

Ebenezer Mason, captain.

Abijah Livermore, lieutenant.

Joseph Livermore, ensign.

Benjamin Bemis, jr., Wm. Green, Wm. White, and Samuel Hall, sergeants.

Oliver Watson, Jonas Muzzy, Asa Sprague, and Jeduthan Green, corporals.

James Draper, drummer, Luther Prouty, fifer.

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| John Draper, | John Bemis, |
| Jesse Bemis, | John Ball, |
| Isaac Prouty, | David Livermore, |
| Nathaniel Wilson, | James Watson, |
| Benjamin Sumner, | Robert Watson, |
| John Woodward, jr., | Thomas Whittemore, |
| Jonas Lamb, | Nathaniel Loring, |
| Thomas Sprague, | Isaac Livermore, |

Michael Hatch,
 Jonathan Rich,
 John Waite,
 John Knapp,
 Joseph Grout,
 Benjamin Gleason,
 Joseph Wheat,
 Levi Thayer,
 Joshua Draper, jr.,
 Elisha Whitney,
 Reuben Lamb,
 John Hatch,
 Amos Whittemore,
 Wright Woodward,

Samuel Bemis,
 Rand White,
 David Rice,
 Richard Hutton,
 Samuel Garfield, jr.,
 Nathaniel Cunningham,
 John Lamb, jr.,
 Asa Whittemore,
 John Worcester,
 Elijah Southgate,
 Knight Sprague,
 David Lamb,
 Timothy Capen.

Roll of captain Phinehas Moore's company of minute men of Paxton,
 commanded by colonel Ephraim Doolittle, who marched on the alarm,
 the 19th April, 1775, from Paxton to Cambridge.

Phinehas Moore, captain.

Josiah Newton, lieutenant.

Seth Snow, second lieutenant.

Adam Maynard and Ephraim Bellows, sergeants.

William Heard, fifer.

David Knapp,
 Jeremiah Whitaker,
 James Green,
 Job Johnson,
 James Sproat,
 Joshua (or John) Bigelow,
 Thomas Greenwood,
 Nathan Swan,
 Oliver Earle,
 James Logan,
 John Davis,
 Abijah Brown,
 Jonathan Waite,
 Thomas Lamb,

Jonathan Hubbard,
 Thomas Hunt,
 Clark Earle,
 Joseph Knight,
 James Pike,
 Samuel Gould,
 Aaron Martin,
 Samuel Steward, jr.,
 David Snow, jr.,
 Silas Bellows,
 Josiah Baldwin,
 Jonathan Clemons, jr.,
 Jason Livermore,
 William Thompson.]

A muster roll of a company under command of Seth Washburn, in colonel Jonathan Ward's regiment, in the eight months' service, in 1775.

Seth Washburn, captain.

Joseph Livermore, Spencer, lieutenant.

Loring Lincoln, Leicester, second lieutenant.

Peleg Hersey, John Brown, Anthony Sprague, and Wm. Crossman, Leicester, sergeants.

Hezekiah Saunderson and Daniel Hubbard, Leicester, Elijah Southgate, Spencer, and Kerley Ward, Oakham, corporals.

Elijah Torrey, Leicester, fifer.

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|---|--|
| Andrew Morgan, Spencer. | Adam Gilmore, Leicester. |
| Alexander McFarland, Oakham. | David Newhall, |
| Joseph Washburn, Leicester. | Daniel Denny, |
| Jonas Lamb, Spencer. | Ebenezer Saunderson, |
| Jesse Jones, Weston. | Elijah Comins, |
| John Thompson, Paxton. | Elias Green, |
| Matthew Jackson, Rutland, afterwards Leicester. | Israel Saunderson, |
| Peter Rice, Spencer. | John Weaver, |
| Silas Livermore, Weston. | Isaac Livermore, jr., |
| Thomas Sprague, Spencer. | Jonathan Sargent, |
| Samuel Underwood, Weston. | Job Stetson, |
| Silas Bellows, Paxton. | James Greaton, |
| George Dunn, Oakham. | Morris Huggins, |
| Samuel Fairfield, Worcester. | Nathan Craige, |
| Joseph Prescott, Paxton. | James Richardson, |
| Thomas Stevens, Holden. | William Brown and James Tucker, left the company June 14. |
| Ebenezer Prescott, Paxton. | Phinehas Green, |
| John Hatch, Spencer. | Phinches Green, jr., |
| Thomas Gill and Robert Hooper, Oakham, enlisted July 1. | Perley Brown, |
| Zillai Stickney, Holden. | Stephen Taylor, |
| Wright Woodward, Spencer. | Samuel Sargent, |
| Isaac Livermore, Spencer. | Abner Livermore, |
| Elisha Livermore, Brookfield. | Thomas Green, |
| John Hagar, Weston. | John Green, |
| John Cleveland, Gloucester. | Daniel Sargent, left June 14, |
| Abijah Stowers, Leicester. | Jason Livermore, left June 14, |
| | Jonathan Jackson. |

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